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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000101

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SUBJECT: YOUTH LEADER CLAIMS CIVIL SOCIETY NOT CREDIBLE

Classified By: POLOFF S. SMITH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (S) SUMMARY. During a February 11 meeting with Poloff, prominent youth leader Thierno Balde shared his perspective on recent political events in Guinea. He found the CNDD's increased intimidation of the media and the close relationship between the Minister of Justice and Claude Pivi troubling. Balde argued for constitutional reform prior to elections and expressed dissatisfaction with civil society. Balde further recommended targeted, individual sanctions as a more effective response from the international community. END SUMMARY.

12. (S) On February 11, Poloff met with Thierno Balde, a long-standing Embassy contact who has previously worked closely with the CNDD. Over the course of the meeting, Balde conveyed his growing concern with the actions of the CNDD, prospects for constitutional reform, his perspective on civil society leaders, and measures he recommended to pressure the CNDD to hold elections.

MEDIA INTIMIDATION

13. (S) Expressing concern over increasing intimidation of the media by the CNDD, Balde cited fallout from a recent article in the local newspaper L'Observateur, which accused Minister of Defense Sekouba Konate of accepting a bribe from officials at the Port Autonome. Other sources confirmed that shortly after the article's publication, members of the military arrived at the home of Tibou Kamara, the former Director of the L'Observateur who is also former Minister of Communication and New Information Technology, and ex-President of the National Council of Communication (CNC). As Kamara was not home, the soldiers presented his cousin with a letter demanding that Kamara present himself at Camp Alpha Yaya. When the cousin questioned the soldiers about the letter, they arrested him and took him to the camp. The cousin was later released and Kamara has since gone into hiding. According to Balde, the CNDD recently convened a meeting to discuss the urgency of finding Kamara and decided to arrest the current Director of L'Observateur, Mouctar Diallo, if he is not soon found.

MINISTER OF JUSTICE PROTECTS PIVI

14. (S) Balde expressed concern that former mutiny leader and Minister of Presidential Security Claude Pivi continues to arrest people and detain them at Camp Alpha Yaya. Balde was uncertain of the number of arrests, but noted they are reportedly civil cases unrelated to the CNDD's ongoing audits. Balde described the relationship between Pivi and the Minister of Justice, Colonel Siba Noulamou, as very close,

noting that Pivi might be the Minister's nephew. Balde was troubled by this relationship and said that he sees Pivi as being protected by the Ministry of Justice. (COMMENT. This may be sour grapes on Balde's part, as he was passed over by the CNDD for the position of Minister of Justice. END COMMENT.)

COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

15. (S) Balde stated his desire to see the creation of a Commission on Constitutional Reform within the CNDD. He argued that a review of the constitution was a prerequisite to elections and could be done within few months. Poloff emphasized that this was unacceptable to the USG and that a constitution created by the military would not be legitimate.

Balde argued that any constitution would be adopted by referendum and therefore legitimate. When Poloff argued that constitutional reform should not be imposed by a military regime, regardless of whether or not there is a national vote, Balde countered that the reality in Guinea necessitates reform and that a review of the constitution prior to elections would be more efficient.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DADIS AND CONTE

16. (S) Balde told Poloff that while he believed Dadis Camara to be sincere about holding elections, he doubted the people

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around the President. As an example, Balde noted that when he told Dadis Camara that elections were possible within twelve months, he was directly contradicted by the Minister of Justice who said that elections would require at least two years. Balde explained that the "difference between Dadis and Conte is that Dadis will listen." Poloff commented that Dadis Camara has only been in power for two months whereas Conte had been for 24 years. Poloff also suggested that Dadis Camara's recent behavior is indicative of an emerging dictator. Balde conceded that Dadis Camara had indeed listened more in the early weeks after the coup.

CIVIL SOCIETY IS UNRELIABLE

17. (S) Expressing his disappointment in civil society, Balde claimed some civil society leaders are lobbying the junta for government positions. According to Balde, Thierno Aliou Diaoune, a prominent leader in the National Council for Civil Society Organizations (CNOSC), has been lobbying strongly for the position of Director of the Gambling Commission. A Presidential decree appointing him to that position has already been written, but is being held because it is potentially controversial. Similarly, Hadja Saran Daraba, former Minister of Social Affairs and current Vice President of CNOSC, initially lobbied for the Minister of Foreign Affairs but was turned down. Balde also noted that Ben Sekou Sylla, the President of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), is also President of CNOSC.

18. (S) Balde said this disappointment with current civil society leaders inspired him to form a coalition among various human rights groups and youth organizations. Balde noted that even some CNOSC members have joined his coalition.

When Poloff remarked that the coalition might not endear him to the CNDD, Balde replied that he had already been asked to be a member of the government but had refused. At present, he said that he sees value in having access to information and to key people in CNDD.

TARGETED SANCTIONS

¶18. (S) Contrary to individual claims by members of the CNDD, Balde contends that the CNDD is not concerned about assistance or deteriorating bilateral relationships. Instead, Balde suggested that they would respond to international pressure through "targeted individual sanctions" such as freezing foreign bank accounts, preventing key actors and their family members from traveling (by denying visas), and publicly holding people accountable for human rights violations.

COMMENT

¶19. (S) The media intimidation, taken with other recent events, demonstrates that the CNDD appears to be consolidating its power. That Pivi, a known human rights violator, is strengthening his position is also cause for concern. As such, Balde appears to be increasingly distancing himself from the CNDD. However, his approach to moving Guinea towards democracy is contradictory. A belief that members of civil society will never be able to reach agreement seems to be at the root of his insistence that the CNDD lead constitutional reform. Nevertheless, he is attempting to form another coalition group. Because his efforts to bring together members of civil society have been unsuccessful in the past, his ability to launch another movement is questionable.

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